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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0018

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5366

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3007

RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 1271

RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1240

RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2206

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4885

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2471

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3045

RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3970

RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 2952

RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 1116

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001701

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/AWH, DRL/IRF
NSC FOR E. PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2018

TAGS: PGOV KIRF KISL ID

SUBJECT: AHMADIYAH SECT: PRESIDENT SUMMONS SOUTH SUMATRA
GOVERNOR OVER BAN

REF: JAKARTA 1677 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak for reasons 1.4 (b+d)

¶1. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan.

¶2. (C) SUMMARY: President Yudhoyono has summoned South Sumatra acting Governor Mahyudin to Jakarta in order to discuss the governor's recent decision to ban the Islamic sect Ahmadiyah. The meeting has not yet taken place, but its apparent purpose will be to express presidential concern about the acting governor's action, which appears to exceed national rules re the sect. In the meantime, the acting governor appears to be receiving support at home from Muslim groups. The South Sumatra decree has not been implemented and Ahmadiyah continues to observe Ramadhan peacefully. Mission continues to urge the Indonesian government to work to protect religious freedom. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) A PRESIDENTIAL SUMMONS: Following the announcement on September 1 by South Sumatra acting Governor Mahyudin (one name only) that prohibited all activities of the minority Islamic sect Ahmadiyah in the province, Home Minister Mardiyanto summoned the acting governor to Jakarta on behalf of President Yudhoyono. The meeting has not taken place yet, but its apparent purpose will be to express presidential concern about the governor's action, which appears to exceed national rules re the sect. One Presidential Advisor, Adnan Buyung Nasution, has already spoken out against the ban. (Note: Per reflets, in June, the central government issued a national joint-ministerial decree prohibiting Ahmadiyah from proselytizing, among other things. The decree stopped short of banning the sect outright. Hardline groups claim the small sect deviates from the true teachings of Islam.)

¶4. (C) SUPPORT IN SOUTH SUMATRA: The governor is netting some political support at home for his action. Islamic organizations in South Sumatra generally support the ban. Sodikun (one name only), Chair of the local chapter of the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI)--the quasi-government body of

Islamic scholars who originally called on the central government to ban the sect--said, "We support the governor's decision, which is firmer than the central government's indecisive stance." He said several clerics would accompany the governor to his meeting with the president whenever it took place and would ask the president not to annul the governor's decision for fear it would "insult" the residents of the province. Additionally, the local chapter of MUI is likely to continue lobbying for a nationwide presidential decree dissolving the sect.

¶15. (SBU) AHMADIYAH OBSERVE RAMADHAN: The South Sumatra decree has not been implemented and Ahmadiyah continue to observe Ramadhan peacefully both in that region and elsewhere in Indonesia. Ahmad Mubariq, an Ahmadiyah spokesperson, said the group did not have an official public comment yet regarding the ban. He said the local Ahmadiyah community was continuing its regular religious activities at home during Ramadhan, but added that sect members were both "confused" and "disappointed" over the ban.

¶16. (SBU) On the positive side, there remains significant pressure from moderate groups against the South Sumatra ban, including from the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), which is demanding that the ban be revoked. Ahmadiyah is also working in private with YLBHI on a plan to take legal action against the acting governor over the ban, claiming it is unconstitutional (Reftel). In a press release on September 2, YLBHI urged the acting governor to cancel the official banning of Ahmadiyah, saying he had released a regulation which was "beyond his authority."

¶17. (C) PRESSING FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: Mission continues to
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urge the GoI to respect freedom of religion and protect the rights of minority religions. It is positive that the Palace has sent out word re the "summons" of the acting governor. By doing this, the GoI is making pretty clear its disapproval of his action. There continue to be accusations that the acting governor took the step in order to please Islamic groups ahead of the recent gubernatorial election in South Sumatra. If that was the case, the acting governor may be disappointed because his favored candidate seems to be behind in the count (see reftel).

HUME